



## Assessment<sup>1</sup> of Pilot<sup>2</sup> Countries' Implementation of the United Nations Joint Programme on Essential Services Guidance for Women and Girls Subject to Violence (2017-2018)

### I. Background

Violence against women and girls ('VAWG') is one of the most universal and pervasive human rights violations in the world. It constitutes a human rights violation of pandemic proportions, with country data showing that about one third of women in the world report experiencing physical and/or sexual violence at some point in their lifetime, mainly by their partners. The magnitude of violence against women translates into very high costs – for women and girl's lives and well-being, health and safety, as well as for school achievement, productivity, public policies and budgets. It has impacts on children, other family members, and whole communities. If unaddressed, these human rights violations can hamper efforts to achieve Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 5, and the as well as the broader 2030 agenda. Providing access to a set of quality, accessible, multisectoral and coordinated essential services can provide women and girls with the opportunity to break recurrent cycles of violence and mitigate the consequences of such violence.

At the national level, many countries are yet to develop action plans or strategies to end VAWG that are explicitly focused on achieving comprehensive multi-sectoral quality services for all women and girls who have experienced violence. In addition, while there are some normative standards at the international level, there has been no formally recognized global guidance on provision of services.

#### **The Joint Global Programme on Essential Services for Women and Girls Subject to Violence**

The Joint Global Programme on Essential Services for Women and Girls subject to Violence (**hereinafter 'the Joint Programme'**), co-managed by UN Women and UNFPA, in partnership with WHO, UNDP and UNODC, is aimed at responding to these critical gaps and challenges. More specifically, it aims to provide a set of recognized global guidance and tools on how to

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<sup>2</sup> The report also examines how a number of self-starter countries are using the Essential Services Package, the related tools and how this is contributing to improving the standard and delivery of overall essential services across the health, police and justice, social services sectors, as well as in the area of coordination, in these countries.

develop and implement the global norms on multi-sectoral services and responses, with a focus on health, police, justice and social services, in addition to coordination of these services.

In consultation with experts, researchers, practitioners, governments and civil society, the Joint Programme has already reached an agreement on the set of essential services that should be provided for women and girls vulnerable to, or that have been subjected to violence.<sup>3</sup> The *Essential Services Package for Women and Girls Subject to Violence: Core Elements and Quality Guidelines*<sup>4</sup> (hereinafter ‘the Essential Services Package’) was launched at the end of 2015 and is currently being implemented alongside other tools on essential services<sup>5</sup> through their implementation in selected pilot countries, with a view to supporting and advocating for their global rollout.

Currently, 10 countries have been chosen as pilot countries: **Cambodia, Solomon Islands, Kiribati, Pakistan and Vietnam** (UN Women-coordinated pilot countries); with **Tunisia, Mozambique, Egypt, Guatemala and Peru** in LAC (UNFPA-coordinated pilot countries). The Joint Programme is supporting these countries to develop and/or adapt quality standards and/or guidelines for the provision of essential services, as well as providing capacity building for service providers. All 10 pilot countries have developed joint annual work plans, in conjunction with other participating UN organizations and Government partners at the country level and have completed Year 1 of implementation (1 July 2017 – 30 June 2018).

While 10 pilot countries have been identified and supported technically and financially for the testing and roll-out of the quality standards, the Joint Programme is also providing technical assistance to a number of ‘self-starter’ countries engaged in the roll-out of all or part of these standards through their own national budgets and/or modest funding from the Joint Programme.<sup>6</sup>

## II. Objectives of the Assessment

The objective of this report is to assess:

- 1) How the pilot countries are using the Essential Services Package and related tools. Also, how this is contributing to improving the standard and delivery of overall essential services across the health, police and justice, social services sectors. This report will also assess coordination in these countries, with the overall goal being to sustainably integrate the Essential Services Package into national frameworks.

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<sup>3</sup> In the case of the health component, these ‘essential actions’ are based on WHO guidelines for responding to violence against women.

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2015/12/essential-services-package-for-women-and-girls-subject-to-violence>

<sup>5</sup> A companion module or *Implementation Guide*, intended to assist countries in the roll-out and implementation of the Essential Services Package at a country level was further developed in 2016-7, (see further: <http://www.unwomen.org/-/media/headquarters/attachments/sections/library/publications/2015/essential-services-package-module-6-en.pdf?la=en&vs=5015>) along with an e-learning course on the Essential Services Package (see further: <https://trainingcentre.unwomen.org/enrol/index.php?id=96>).

<sup>6</sup> Currently, there are 40 countries which have been proposed by the participating UN organizations as ‘self-starters’.

- 2) How a number of self-starter countries are using the Essential Services Package, the related tools and how this is contributing to improving the standard and delivery of overall essential services across the health, police and justice, social services sectors, as well as in the area of coordination, in these countries.

In the assessment of how pilot and self-starter countries are using the Essential Services Package the following factors were considered and various information sources analyzed:

- To what extent the Essential Services Package (ESP) is improving the standard and delivery of overall essential services in the health, police and justice, social services sectors, as well as in the area of coordination within these countries;
- Whether the Essential Services Package (ESP) is contributing to the sustainability through its integration in countries' national frameworks;
- Pilot country annual work plans and situational analyses; annual and periodic monitoring reports submitted by pilot countries; surveys on standard of service delivery and methodologies for training of service providers; any additional necessary documentation;
- Contact with Joint Programme focal points (through skype, phone calls, email etc.) from the regional, pilot and selected self-starter countries, in addition to global Joint Programme focal points as necessary, as part of preparation for the analysis;<sup>7</sup>
- Coordination and collaboration between Joint Programme work on Essential Services and other ongoing work on essential services in these countries; and
- Overall gaps and challenges.

### III. Findings and Assessment of the Joint Global Programme on Essential Services for Women and Girls Subject to Violence

The Joint Global Programme on Essential Services for Women and Girls Subject to Violence seeks to support countries as they work to design, implement and monitor services for all women and girls who are victims and survivors of violence. Initial findings demonstrated that the Joint Programme is contributing to improving the standard and delivery of overall essential services across the health, police and justice, social services sectors, as well as in coordination in pilot and selected 'self-starter' countries.

The Joint Programme has improved the access to coordinated, quality essential services for women and girls. After a review of monitoring reports, annual work plans and extensive interviews with representatives of the pilot countries, **it is clear that the Essential Services Joint Programme guidelines have been instrumental in assisting a number of countries to make policy changes needed at a national level.**

While there are a number of differences among each pilot and selected self-starter country that are implementing the ESP under the Joint Programme, the Package has clearly contributed to

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<sup>7</sup> Phone/Skype contact was made with a representative of all ten pilot countries and seven of the self-starter countries regarding their Joint Programme on Essential Services.

improving the standard and delivery of overall essential services to increase the safety of women and girls across the globe. As one partner in Pakistan stated, “On a scale of 1-10 with ten being the highest standard, we started out at a three. When the Essential Services Guidelines entered our work, they moved our work ahead much faster. Simply put, the Joint Programme on Essential Services moved our needle of progress.”

The overall ways in which the Joint Programme and the ESP have made an impact in pilot and selected self-starter countries include:

### **1. The Joint Programme and ESP have been a unifying agent for national partners**

In each of the 10 pilot countries, the existence of the Joint Programme and the Essential Services Package have been disseminated and discussed and have been a ‘unifying agent’, to bring multiple national partners together to meet on a regular basis. Prior to the Joint Programme, in many countries, there had been few meetings on a regular basis to address VAWG. The Joint Programme in particular has helped make addressing the problem of VAWG a priority. As an international model, the Joint Programme has created investment by prioritizing violence against women and girls within the national agencies in each pilot country and selected self-starter countries. Inter-agency work has improved, and the standards and guidelines have clearly identified ‘essential actions’ in each sector and importantly, existing gaps. For example, in Mozambique, the Joint Programme was named as the “central document” to guide the work for the Ministry of Health, Ministry of Interior, Ministry of Justice and the Ministry of Gender, as they came together to work on response.

### **2. Created credibility and validity to prior and proposed work**

The Joint Programme and ESP provided credibility and validity to the work that was previously being conducted at a national level in every country interviewed. As one pilot country partner in Pakistan stated, “We had been working towards adopting this type of policy and practice shift for a long time. When the Essential Services Guidelines were finalized and became a part of our work, they provided the necessary credibility and validity to move our work forward. They have been used to implement all of our projects.” Another pilot country partner stated, “There were times when we wanted to put forward an initiative and it was doubted. Once the Essential Services Guidelines were created, it re-affirmed what we wanted to do and moved ideas forward faster.” In Vietnam, the representative stated, “There were times in the past where we did not think that something was necessarily the best, but now we have the Guidelines to validate our ideas and it re-affirms what we want to do.” In Cambodia, the Joint Programme and ESP has a lot of credibility and serves as an international model for implementing the local work to end VAWG.

**The Joint Programme also strengthened the credibility of NGOs.** Numerous examples were shared regarding the lack of respect that was previously given to civil society organizations and NGOs. For example, previous to the inception of the Joint Programme on Essential Services, NGOs and CSOs in many countries were not invited to key meetings

to address VAWG. However, because these organizations more than often provide the only response for survivors – whether through provision of information, referrals or a, staff with the skills-set needed for this work, their credibility has since increased. In Cambodia, NGOs regularly experience on-going hostility; however, the advent of the Joint Programme and the Package have helped to change the culture and environment in which NGOs work.

### **3. The Essential Services Package is a valuable resource to all national partners**

The Essential Services Package is a resource and a tool that each pilot and self-starter country use as a basis for moving their work on provision of quality essential services forward. Partners at the country level often explained that, at every meeting, they refer to the ESP when they have substantive discussions about policy and practice development. The Joint Programme has guided policy, law review and helped create a set of minimum standards on provision of essential services for many national laws and policies. For example, in Pakistan, the Joint Programme is now used as a reference tool in all projects to address VAWG. In Cambodia, the Joint Programme and ESP are the basis for the development of policy and their efforts to change national law.

### **4. The Essential Services Package has become the minimum standards on provision of essential services**

For the countries who are more ‘advanced’ in their work on essential services, for example, in Cambodia and Ethiopia, the Essential Services Package has become the ‘minimum standards’ in policy and practice. For those countries, such as Mozambique and Egypt, who still consider themselves working towards implementing these standards, they consider the guidelines a goal towards which to work.

### **5. Enhanced coordination amongst UN agencies**

The Joint Programme has been ‘revered’ as one of the most successful collaborative joint programmes by those staff working on EAWG in the pilot and self-starter countries interviewed. Most had stated that the Joint Programme on Essential Services had been the most significant joint programme they have been a part of in the course of their work.

### **6. The Joint Programme has been the impetus and basis for developing National Action Plans to address VAWG**

After the beginning of the implementation of the Joint Programme, several countries began to develop and enhance their own national action plans to address VAWG/GBV. The Essential Services Guidelines informed the types of actions and interventions that are now included in these national action plans. For example, Kazakhstan, Uruguay and Kyrgyzstan included activities based on the guidance set out in the ESP in their national action plan to address VAWG. In Ethiopia, the ESP is the basis of the work undertaken in the national and strategic plan on VAWG. In Uruguay, the Ministry of Health has become a leader and implemented and adopted the health manual.

## **7. Contributed to a national shared understanding of the root causes of VAWG**

What became clear to many pilot and self-starter countries as their work progressed is that they have come closer to having a shared understanding and belief system about the root causes of VAWG as a human rights violation tied to gender inequality, discrimination of women, and male entitlement. One representative from the UN Women Pakistan office described, “Our partners have become much more ‘gender-sensitized’ about violence against women. Women do not get blamed as much.” In order for there to be a coordinated and systemic response to VAWG, there must first be a common shared understanding about the causes of such violence. Once partners have a common shared understanding, they will be more unified in their approach to addressing the problem.

## **8. Impetus for creating specialized units and centers to address VAWG**

The Essential Services Joint Programme has created a significant amount of investment on the part of national partners to develop internationally-known ‘best practice’ strategies to address VAWG. One of the most common strategies that have been employed is the creation of specialized units in criminal justice and social service sectors to address VAWG. In Viet Nam, a ‘Domestic Violence Rapid Response Team’ was created. This team consists of a team of local civil society women’s organizations and the government to respond on the scene of a high risk domestic violence incident. For example, in Pakistan, a Violence Against Women Center was created and in Guatemala a protocol was created by a specialized unit to address femicide. In Guatemala and Cambodia, the Joint Programme was the impetus for the development and training of specialized investigators on violence against women. This has resulted in the arrest of greater numbers of individuals implicated in sex trafficking. In Peru, a service center for survivors was created as a result of the Joint Programme on Essential Services. This service center provides for a confidential space for victims to go to get help with basic needs.

## **9. Changes in national legislation addressing VAWG have become more evident**

A number of countries used the ESP to advance their work on addressing VAWG and this change resulted in amendments to national laws to on VAWG. For example, in the Uruguay, the previous law was described as minimal in addressing VAWG. The Joint Programme on Essential Services was the basis for advancing their law to become more comprehensive. In the self-starter country of Guatemala, the law was amended to include national legislation to require a protocol for femicide. In Cambodia, the law was amended to make sexual assault exams for rape victims free of charge. All of these changes were as a result of the work being developed and enhanced from the ESP.

## **10. Expanded the scope of work on VAWG/essential services**

Prior to the inception of the Joint Programme, several pilot and self-starter either only previously focused on one type of violence against women and girls or only single agencies

amongst national government agencies were addressing the problem. The Guidelines have encouraged *all* partners to consider and address *all* types of VAWG. For example, in Guatemala, previous to the Joint Programme on Essential Services, the Ministry of Health mostly focused on sexual violence. The Joint Programme has since broadened the focus of the Ministry of Health and other agencies in Guatemala to address all forms of VAWG. For example, prior to the Joint Programme and ESP, in Guatemala they primarily focused on sexual assault. Notably, domestic violence was the type of violence against women that was least addressed in a number of countries.

## **11. Used as the basis for newly-developed training and policies**

All interviewed pilot and self-starter countries explained and detailed in their reports that the Essential Services Joint Programme was always used as a basis for training and policy development over the last year. For example, in Tunisia 15,000 health care workers, which represents 25% of the total staff of the Ministry of Health in the country were trained on identifying and responding to VAWG. Tunisia was also successful in ensuring that modules to address VAWG were added to the police academy curricula. These modules specifically addressed VAWG. Prior to the Joint Programme and ESP, VAWG was not a part of the on-going curriculum used in the police academy. In Kiribati, the SAFENET Guidebook was developed for use in the criminal justice system. This has included a no-drop policy by the prosecutors. The SAFENET Guidebook is the basis for responding to cases of VAWG by the case management review committee. This case management review committee responds to high risk cases. The Joint Programme and the ESP have provided the basis for this ‘essential action’.

## **12. Increased focus on offender accountability**

The guidance set out in Module 3 Justice and Policing of the Essential Services Package provided a greater focus on addressing the accountability of perpetrators of VAWG. One interviewee stated, “Previously, the discussions primarily focused on helping victims and meeting their needs. We knew that to help victims, one part of that is to hold their offenders accountable. Many were resistant to what we proposed in the past. Having these Guidelines state how important that is has lessened the resistance we get now when we bring it up.” In Kiribati, the ESP brought forth discussion and initiatives to address accountability of offenders where there previously had been none. For example, with the development of the high-risk case management team, agencies now focus their efforts on holding the offender accountable for their violence. In Mozambique, the Joint Programme was a major impetus for a change in attitude about the accountability of offenders. For example, in Mozambique, the Joint Programme and ESP helped them communicate the basic message that “Domestic violence is a crime.” Thus, the ESP Guidelines has demonstrated the importance of focusing on offender accountability in addressing VAWG.

### **13. Inter-agency work within the pilot and self-starter countries has improved as a result of the Joint Programme on Essential Services**

Before the creation of Joint Programme on Essential Services, there was limited inter-agency work, referrals between local national agencies, and coordinated practices undertaken in the pilot and self-starter countries. In Guatemala, it was reported that the Joint Programme has directly contributed to their inter-agency work. For example, the Ministry of Health previously only assisted in cases involving the physical injuries related to a sexual violence incident. Now, as a result of the guidance in Module 2 on Health and the WHO tools and guidance, they also refer survivors to a psychologist when needed, and also call upon a social worker to help survivors report violence to the police and prosecutor. In the Solomon Islands, a major component of their work has been on strengthening inter-agency work and an enhanced referral system to guide survivors about where to get the help they need. They also created SAFENET, an advanced network of NGOs addressing VAWG.

### **14. The Joint Programme on Essential Services has advanced the health response to VAWG**

The Essential Services Module on Health and WHO methodologies have been incorporated in nearly every pilot country and self-starter country interviewed. In Guatemala, for example, the WHO methodologies and the Essential Services Module on Health were the basis for the development of a manual for health care providers on dealing with children who have been exposed to domestic violence. Similarly, in Egypt, the work on addressing the health needs of women and girls who have experienced violence has been significantly advanced because of the WHO guidance and Module 2 on Health from the ESP. Local health providers now have a protocol on how to respond when a woman tells a health worker that she has experienced violence. In Uruguay, they are the first country in the LAC region to implement the WHO methodologies and the ESP Health Module as part of the health care response for survivors.

## **IV. Challenges Experienced in Implementing the Joint Global Programme on Essential Services for Women and Girls Subject to Violence**

Overall, the Joint Programme on Essential Services has contributed to improving the response to the issue of VAWG. However, there have been a number of challenges that the pilot and self-starter countries have faced in their work. These include:

### **1. Change in leadership in key national agencies**

A significant barrier for a number of the countries interviewed was changes in national leadership due, for example, to an election or resignation of an official/focal point. When



key leaders in national agencies change, it becomes a challenge to implement an initiative such as the Joint Programme. It significantly delays the continuation and completion of work that had been done prior. For example, in Guatemala, during the last year there has been three different Secretariat of Women, two Attorney Generals, and three Ministers of Health. In some instances, such as Pakistan, when the leadership changed, there was less interest in prioritizing VAWG as an issue that needs addressing. When decision makers are not sympathetic to addressing VAWG, the ESP was not implemented. In Peru, major changes were created with the development of new policies to address VAWG and then there was a change in the leadership of all Ministries after an election. This then essentially required the local partners to start over to get approval of the previous policies.

## **2. Coordination of leaders**

The most common challenge amongst all of the self-starter and pilot countries has been the amount of time it initially took to coordinate and get agreement from national leaders to be a part of the Joint Programme on Essential Services. In some instances, it took as long as eight months to get a signature on key documents. In Ethiopia, in particular, they described that coordinating leaders at all levels of government has proved to be very challenging.

## **3. Many policies were changed; however, the practice and implementation of those changes have been minimal**

As noted above, significant shifts in policy have taken place in pilot and self-starter countries during the first year of implementation. For example, the creation of the SAFENET policy in Kiribati was a major undertaking and change in policy. However, in many of these countries, these shifts have been minimally communicated to many staff at the regional and provincial levels. Many of the pilot and self-starter countries described needing significantly more time and resources to communicate and implement at the regional and provincial levels. Changing a policy in and of itself does not create a shift in practice. The pilot and self-starter countries need time and resources to communicate and provide training to the local and regional levels about changes in policy, and guidance on how to implement these.

## **4. Significant resistance experienced in implementing the Justice and Policing Module**

The Justice and Policing module of the ESP was consistently cited as the most challenging to implement. There was significant resistance and a lack of transparency and openness amongst a number of national criminal and civil justice agencies to implementing selected 'essential actions' from Justice and Policing Module. In particular, accountability of perpetrators is a major challenge and many police and justice agencies will not share their data for the extent of this problem to even be exposed. In some countries, respondents noted that the police hold a disproportionate amount of power and are less trusted by the community. There was also a lack of investment by national justice and policing agencies to prioritize VAWG or they believed that they were adequately already addressing this issue. For example, one pilot country (who asked to remain anonymous) stated, "The police

know that they are not adequately addressing VAWG. Partnering with us to make changes feels like to them that their lack of response will be exposed.”

## **5. Monitoring mechanisms not established**

While a significant number of policy changes have been made, there was substantial concern among interviewees that, without the proper mechanisms in place to monitor and support newly-introduced policies, they will not be implemented consistently. While this is a valid concern, it is a common challenge that all practitioners who do work on addressing VAWG face. Each pilot and self-starter country need to time to develop and/or strengthen existing internal monitoring mechanisms within each national agency and, if necessary, an external monitoring mechanism that is a coordinated multi-disciplinary group of key stakeholders.

## **6. Traditional attitudes and beliefs about the family still exist**

A significant challenge for most of the pilot and self-starter countries interviewed was to foster a shared understanding on the root causes of VAWG amongst all national agencies and key stakeholders; this mostly includes women’s organization and government sector agencies and local faith-based leaders who hold significant power in the country. In a number of countries, some religious organizations and institutions actively and successfully advocate against initiatives that support VAWG. As the Joint Programme on Essential Services is one such initiative, there has been some active opposition to its existence by religious institutions and organizations. For example, the religious institutions and organizations in the Solomon Islands do not work from a human rights philosophy to address VAWG and have been vocal in their opposition to the Joint Programme on Essential Services and similar initiatives on provision of essential services which have previously been proposed. They believe that solutions such as couples counseling, spiritual practices and mediation are the solution that can better address the violence and ensures that the family unit will stay intact.

## **7. Need for additional technical assistance and specialized trainers to assist pilot and self-starter countries on areas of specific need.**

Many of the pilot and self-starter countries interviewees articulated the need for specific assistance from specialized consultants as and when needed in their projects. They recommended an information-sharing portal where information on such consultants and other relevant information on the Joint Programme, e.g., latest global events, guidance, interesting updates in this field could be accessed. The role of the regional offices to assist in this regard could also be investigated.

## **8. Incorporating the input and feedback of survivors of violence (‘survivors’ voices)**

In Module 1 Introduction, it describes that the Joint Programme on Essential Services should be implemented with a “victim/survivor-centered” approach. This approach places

the rights and needs of women and girl survivors at the center focus of service delivery. As survivors across the world have such different needs, and face different risks in each country, it is imperative that the pilot and self-starter countries integrate this experience in their work. For example, in focus groups, survivors can describe the nuance of how a policy and practice can impact their lives that are important for practitioners to know and understand.

Some countries were not familiar with inclusive techniques that would enable them to effectively gather and include the experiences of survivors of violence into policy and practice. If they had this knowledge and experience, they could incorporate that first-hand knowledge into the system changes required for safer policies and practices. Further resources and training are needed on this important aspect at the country level.

## V. Additional Needs Identified

The following is a summary of additional needs described by the pilot and self-starter countries not already identified above:

### 1. Strengthening local and regional responses as part of the implementation of Joint Programme on Essential Services

The most common need identified by interviewees that they would address with additional funding is to expand their work on provision of essential services beyond the national and centralized levels. There is concern that the work is not being adequately communicated or implemented at the local, provincial or regional levels. A number of countries are also concerned that they have not addressed the needs of those who are most marginalized.

### 2. Greater focus on strengthening implementation of the guidance set out in Module 3 of the ESP on Justice and Policing

**The most common challenge among all of the countries has been implementing the police and justice module guidelines.** Generally, they have experienced significant resistance and lack of access to policies, protocols, and data to make the necessary changes in line with the guidance set out related to this module. Despite the progress and improvements to the legal frameworks and justice systems in each country, the police and justice sector's response has been notably deficient in each country. In Cambodia and Uruguay, interviewees noted that implementation of the Justice and Policing Module is particularly weak. They described rampant corruption and impunity for offenders of violence against women and girls. A quality police and justice response is crucial in ensuring that relevant laws meet international standards and are part of delivering a comprehensive response to the needs of victims and to ensure their safety and access to justice. In addition, the countries interviewed articulated the need for significantly more time to make sure that the laws are enforced and that perpetrators are held accountable.

Admittedly, this is part of a longer-term approach to addressing VAWG. For example, another interviewee from a regional office noted, “Perpetrator accountability is a focus in this module. However how do you address this satisfactorily? This is a big shift for us in our system and culturally. I would want to know what victims in our region think about how we should hold offenders accountable. But, how do we go about doing that?”

## VI. Recommendations

After discussions with interviewees, reviewing their monitoring reports and work plans, the following are recommendations for the Joint Programme Steering Committee to consider:

### **1. Strengthen countries’ efforts to obtain greater collaboration and cooperation for implementing Module 3 on Justice and Policing**

Processing a single incident of violence against women in the criminal justice system involves numerous agencies and practitioners in the police and justice sectors. An effective response, meaning one that leads to an end of the violence, requires coordination across and among the many practitioners involved, as well as a strong system of accountability. The criminal and civil court process’ demands a high level of coordination to carry out the dozens of case processing steps involved in the response. Because of the complexity of the police and justice sectors, the pilot and starter countries need additional time and expertise in implementing many of the Guidelines in this module. It may also be necessary for the Joint Programme to conduct a further analysis of what would specifically assist countries in advancing the Justice and Policing sector work.

Proven methods, technical assistance and training curricula are available to the pilot and self-starter countries. Institutional assessments that include text analysis of police reports, survivors’ focus groups, resource analysis, and court monitoring practices are all available to enable a shift and change in the policies and practices of the justice and policing sectors in these countries. In addition, an analysis is needed of the tools developed to assess risk in cases of domestic violence in particular. Many of the countries have created tools and methodologies related to risk assessment. However, globally, there are many examples of where the validity of the risk assessment has been challenged. In an effort to prevent possible legal issues related to the validity and use of the risk assessment tools, it is highly recommended that those countries who have developed them as part of their work, receive technical assistance to assess what was developed. Specific additional financial resources would be needed for this.

### **2. Provide specific and targeted assistance on Module 3 on Coordination and Governance of Coordination**

A cohesive multi-disciplinary cross-agency approach for responding to violence against women and girls is essential to protecting victims and survivors of intimate partner violence

and non-partner sexual violence. Coordinated Community Responses (CCRs) can have a greater impact in responding to violence against women. Pilot and self-starter countries need clearer guidance on implementing this module and specific technical assistance from international experts on criminal justice, policing, and providing a coordinated response in these sectors. National criminal justice and policing agencies did not show as much of a willingness and openness in making systemic changes.

### **3. Guidance and assistance needed in changing national laws**

Although a long-term goal, and beyond the scope of the initial two-year implementation, several pilot countries noted that they will not be able to fully implement the Essential Services Package until there are changes in their national laws addressing violence against women and girls. A number of countries described needing specific technical assistance in the future to assist them in making these changes. In Ethiopia and Pakistan, they expressed a need for targeted technical assistance in working to change their national laws to strengthen the language to better address VAWG. The pilot and self-starter countries are also aware that they are at the beginning of their work on essential services as part of the Joint Programme and that full implementation of Essential Services and institutional change through laws and policies will happen later.

### **4. Expertise is needed to assist countries in including the experience, voices, and input of survivors of violence**

Women and girls experience a disproportionate amount of violence. One core component of addressing this violence is to address the power imbalance between men and women. Therefore, it is imperative that each pilot and self-starter country take the time to learn from the experiences of women and girls and gather that information in a way that the system can respond to their needs, which is currently missing from the Joint Programme interventions. In addition, when engaging with women survivors, it lets them know that their voices are important. It is important to emphasize that the Essential Services Package was developed and informed by survivors' voices.

If the pilot and self-starter countries do not engage with women and girl survivors, they risk making assumptions about their experiences that may not be true. In addition, the collective experiences of survivors change markedly over time depending on the context, culture, and socio-economic situation in which they live. We do not all experience the world in the same way and an individual's social realities is constructed by differences in class, age, race, and ethnicity, immigration status, sexual orientation, history, privilege, and many other aspects of culture and identity. As a result of the difference in their lives, not all women and girls experience violence in the same way. An effective intervention takes into account the realities of peoples' unique circumstances and social standing.

When policymakers decide how to intervene in the lives of people very different to them, their response will likely meet their needs. Interveners should employ ways to explain and make real what survivors are experiencing to address their specific needs and reduce further

suffering. By ensuring systems meet the needs of the most disadvantaged, then those intervening are most likely to meet the needs of most.

None of the interviewees from pilot and self-starters included the experience, voices, and input of survivors of violence systemically into their work to change policies and/or practices, either through conducting focus groups, surveys or interviews of survivors to provide guidance and input. It was clear that most of the countries were unsure about how to incorporate the voices and experiences of survivors into their work. When meeting with survivors in a focus group, they can pinpoint specific ways that interventions could better promote their safety. The pilot and self-starter countries need additional technical assistance and resources to guide them in how to do this.

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